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MIGRATORY BIRDS INCREASING UNDER FEDERAL PROTECTION

It is believed that many migratory birds are increasing as the result of protective legislation by the Federal Government and by States, Deputy Chief United States Game Warden Talbott Denmead of the Biological Survey, United States Department of Agriculture, told the Izaak Walton League convention at Peterboro, N. H., to-day (September 2) in an address that also included suggestions for further measures to protect migratory birds. He urged better enforcement of the existing laws; curbing of the "bootlegging" of ducks killed unlawfully; further provisions for wildlife refuges; discouragement of drainage projects where the gain to agriculture will not offset to public welfare the loss of the birds and other wildlife; better protection of the natural food supply for birds; studies of bird losses from sickness caused by too great concentration, by alkali poison, disease, and oil pollution; and scientific investigation of bird life as a basis for improved legislation.

Of the game birds listed as surely on the increase in recent years, Mr. Denmead mentioned wild geese, canvasback, mallard, redhead, wood, and black ducks, whistling swans, pintails, and coots. Where observers have thought these birds to be decreasing, he believes it is usually traceable to a change in habits or feeding grounds. A few birds, such as black-bellied and golden plovers, and yellowlegs, have not increased as rapidly as was hoped, and it has been necessary to close the season on these species. Woodcock have been better protected by a recent reduction of the bag limit. The woodcock, Mr. Denmead believes, would have been nearly, if not quite, extinct if it had not received Federal protection when it did.

Preservation of the migratory birds, the deputy chief warden credits largely to the cooperation of the States in enforcing the Federal statutes of 1913 and 1918. Nominally the Biological Survey is charged with enforcement of the Federal legislation, but Congress has never appropriated funds for more than 25 to 30 wardens to cover 48 States, so that little could have been accomplished without the cooperation of the States, the assistance of the State game authorities, and the good will of the public.

Enforcement has been aided by the fact that 41 States have made their laws conform in certain respects with the provisions of the Federal regulations. There has been some friction, particularly in States where early spring shooting had been the rule, but others have provided even more protection than is given by the Federal law. For the most part the Biological Survey has endeavored to confine its regulations to general subjects, leaving to the States such matters as licensing, blinds, baiting, use of decoys, rest days--problems that are more or less local in character and subject to local conditions.

For better enforcement Mr. Denmead suggested the need for at least one full-time United States game warden in every State, and two in the larger States where there are many violations. He also mentioned with approval the bill that has been before Congress to provide game refuges through the cooperation of the State and Federal authorities. States can not handle the refuge problem alone, he said. It must be done by the Federal Government with the assistance of the States.

"Many a farmer's hard-earned dollar," the speaker commented, "has been lost on unwise drainage schemes, and the homes of wild life destroyed without any reason. It must be stopped if we are to save the migratory birds for posterity."

He also mentioned the difficulty in protecting the existing food supply, giving as an example Back Bay in Virginia, a fresh-water area formerly full of food. A few years ago salt water made its way in from the ocean and nearly destroyed the plant growth. This influx was stopped by Federal and State cooperation, but the feeding grounds were again damaged by salt-water from the Chesapeake & Albermarle Canal.

In closing Mr. Denmead made a plea for observance of the Migratory-Bird Treaty of 1916 with Canada, the most effective basis for the preservation of the birds. "Let the United States do its part," Mr. Denmead said, "in order that Great Britain and Canada will have no reason or desire to end the agreement. Let there be no friction between State and Federal control of migratory birds."

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